



House Select Committee on Homeland Security Democrats

JIM TURNER, Ranking Member

www.house.gov/hsc/democrats/

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2003

Contact: Moira Whelan

(202) 226-8827

TURNER-WAXMAN LETTER ON DIRTY BOMBS

In response to the recent media attention to the potential threat of a radiological attack on the United States, Jim Turner, Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, and Henry Waxman, Ranking Member of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee sent a letter today to the Department of Homeland Security.

“The threat from such simple but devastating weapons is not new,” stated the letter. “A dirty bomb—depending on the type, form, amount, and concentration of radioactive material used—could cause radiation exposure in individuals in close proximity to the material for an extended time and potentially increase the long-term risks of cancer for those contaminated.”

The letter requested briefings on the issue as well as answers to several questions regarding the Department's handling of dirty bombs. “We urge your earliest response to our request for a detailed accounting of your agency's efforts to combat this serious threat,” stated the letter.

“A terrorist's greatest weapon is fear. Because the effects of a dirty bomb can take time to develop, the psychological and economic impact of such an attack could be devastating.”

Recent revelations in the press highlight the reality of these warnings and prompted renewed concern of Turner and Waxman. Last week's *Washington Times* alleged that key al Qaeda operatives were spotted in Hamilton, Ontario attempting to obtain radioactive material from McMaster University as part of a plot to strike targets here in the United States.

COPY OF LETTER ATTACHED

###